

HOMILY
A LITURGY OF GRATITUDE AND RESILIENCE

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Good Evening Fellow Members of our Society.

Paul Ricoeur said of the scriptures that, once they were written down, their meaning could not be circumscribed by the immediate circumstances of their composition. Especially after these writings became normative for a community in history, they began to communicate a message that becomes relevant to every moment in which it is heard. Luke was not only addressing Theophilus; he also speaks to us, and his message about the relationship between Jesus, the Spirit of God, and the disciples takes on a significance that closely applies to us professionally.

The disciples of Jesus should be looked upon as more than his clients. They followed him around the villages of Galilee and, as attendants to his teaching and actions, they were learning by apprenticeship how to bear witness to the rule of God. This vocation was awakened by the Pentecost Spirit after his earthly disappearance, and it set in motion the movement that became the Christian church. This introduction to Acts marks a transition in Luke's story. After the story of God as Spirit at work in Jesus' ministry, he turns to the story of the Spirit at work in the community of followers led by his witnesses.

The vocation of theologian is to be a witness; the theologian responds to a call to work with Jesus as a teacher of the rule of God. In the memorial of our deceased members over the past year I invite you actively to follow the lead of each presenter with your imagination and notice how our fellow theologians have actively been co-workers with Jesus in testifying to the rule of God.

Imagine, as each person is called up, the wonderful differences of each one from the others, and marvel at the many shapes of theological witness. Listen to the varied forms that one vocation can take. Each one was dedicated to the same mission. From writing books to awakening the eyes of student comprehension, our predecessors carried and were carried by the dynamism of God as Spirit manifest in Jesus' ministry. Our ministry of witness to the message of Jesus absorbs into itself the humane wisdom and the transcendent value of its content. It is a ministry to the depth of human

personhood, rendered sacred by divine acceptance, and impelled to human reconciliation by God as Spirit.

Finally, as you hear these memorials, think back over the past 75 years of theologians who have walked this path of communicating the Christian message at a deep level. The steady history of the Catholic Theological Society of America is made up of theologians like these men and women.

And as you remember these colleagues, think forward of yourselves as participants in this company of theologians. From all over North America and from other countries as well, we share together a common vocation to think clearly and help others to understand their faith more deeply. May the Spirit of God be with us all, especially in these demanding times. Amen.